

WHAT IS A DESIRABLE CHOLESTEROL LEVEL FOR YOU?



BLOOD CHOLESTEROL TEST (LIPID PANEL)

The blood cholesterol test, also called a lipid panel, involves drawing a tube of blood after a fast of at least 12 hours. A lipid panel measures total cholesterol (T-C), high-density lipoprotein, (HDL), low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and triglyceride levels.

- **Total Cholesterol:** The total amount of cholesterol measured in the blood.
- **HDL:** Responsible for carrying total cholesterol from the cells back to the liver to be processed and removed from the body, often referred to as the *good or helpful cholesterol*.
- **LDL:** Responsible for carrying total cholesterol to the cells. If there is more cholesterol than cells can use, the LDL is recirculated. The circulating cholesterol can begin to build up on the inside of the arteries forming plaque. For this reason, it is often referred to as the *bad or lousy cholesterol*.
- **Triglyceride:** A type of fat that affects the total cholesterol level and increases the risk factors for heart disease. Triglycerides store energy for future use.

DIABETES IS A RISK FACTOR FOR HEART DISEASE

The risk of heart disease for people with diabetes, even if there is no evidence of heart disease at the present time, is the same for people who have known heart disease. A fasting blood sugar equal to or above 126 mg/dL is used to diagnose diabetes. Most diabetics have multiple risk factors for heart disease and aggressive measures should be used to normalize blood sugar and blood cholesterol levels.

COMPLETE BLOOD CHOLESTEROL TEST DURING THE TWENTIES

A complete blood cholesterol level should be performed during the twenties. If the results are normal, another test would not need to be completed for another five years.

Source: National Cholesterol Education Panel

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NATIONAL CHOLESTEROL EDUCATION TREATMENT GUIDELINES

The National Cholesterol Education Panel (NCEP) guidelines for cholesterol management were recently updated. The new guidelines, known as Adult Treatment Panel III (ATP III) urge more aggressive treatment with diet, exercise and medications as needed for people with certain cholesterol levels and other risk factors for heart disease. The emphasis is on primary prevention. Not only is LDL recognized as the major culprit causing heart disease, but also low HDL levels are recognized as equally dangerous.

AGGRESSIVE TREATMENT FOR ELEVATED TRIGLYCERIDES

The new treatment guidelines also recommend more aggressive treatment for elevated triglycerides (greater than 150 mg/dL). Recent studies indicated that elevated triglycerides are significantly linked to the degree of heart disease. The recommendation is to treat even borderline triglycerides through weight control, physical activity and medications, as needed.

INTERPRETATION OF CHOLESTEROL LEVELS *

*(NCEP ATM III Guidelines, 2001)

LDL CHOLESTEROL Less than 100 mg/dL 100-129 mg/dL 130-159 mg/dL 160-189 mg/dL 190 mg/dL or Above	Optimal Near or above optimal Borderline high High Very high
TOTAL CHOLESTEROL Less than 200 mg/dL 200-239 mg/dL 240 mg/dL or above	Desirable Borderline high High
HDL CHOLESTEROL Below 40 mg/dL 60 mg/dL or above	Low Desirable
TRIGLYCERIDES Under 150 mg/dL Over 150 mg/dL	Desirable High

LDL: Low Density Lipoprotein

HDL: High Density Lipoprotein

Source: National Cholesterol Education Panel